

The Literal Association Phenomenon within the Scope of Arabic Linguistics

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Abstract

This article highlights the Phenomenon of the Literal Association (*Zāhirat al-Mushtarak al-Lafẓī*) within the field of Arabic Linguistics in which the perspectives of the classical and modern scholars of Arabic Linguistics are viewed, analysed, and evaluated in order to reach the conclusion of whether or not such a linguistic phenomenon exists. The theory of this research is based on the analytical research methodology and inductive research methodology, which will employ both the quantitative and qualitative approaches by which we explore the definition of the literal association in the Arabic language, the opinions and disputes of scholars of the Arabic language about the existence of literal association in the Arabic language, the factors and the reasons behind the emergence of literal association in the Arabic language, and the factors by which the semantics of the literal association can be determined in the Arabic language.

Key Words: Arabic Linguistics, Literal Association, *al-Mushtarak al-Lafẓī*, *Semantics*, *ʿIlm al-Maʿānī wa al-Dalālah*

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Introduction

The literal association is the translated term of what is called in the Arabic language “*al-Mushtarak al-Lafẓī*” which is a phenomenon under the sub-field of Semantics which is known as “*‘Ilm al-Ma’ānī wa al-Dalālah*” in Arabic, and it is one of the most important topics of research in that field³. The first scholar of linguistics and the Arabic language who introduced this phenomenon is Sībawayh in his book called *Kitāb Sībawayh* under the section of The Wording and the Meanings, where he has mentioned this phenomenon and provided a very brief definition without going into further details⁴. The literal association is a phenomenon in which a single word bears and holds more than one meaning⁵. This phenomenon plays an important role in the sense relations of semantics. Therefore, scholars have analyzed and recognized the importance of such a phenomenon due to the huge impact that it has on the perception and reception of speech, whether it is written or verbal, which may affect the legislation and the understanding of many issues and matters related to Linguistics, concepts of *Fiqh*, the science of *Ḥadīth*, and the science of the *Qur’ān*. And this impact can be seen clearly in the words that have developed semantically, especially the words that have adopted Islamic meanings over the linguistic meanings such as ‘*al-ṣalāh*’ (the prayer)⁶. Thus, there are many scholars of Arabic who have written many books and done a lot of work on literal association (*al-Mushtarak al-Lafẓī*) with regards to Linguistics, and these are some examples of some of their work:

- *Mu’jam al-Alfādh al-Mushtarakah fī al-Lughat al-‘Arabiyyah* by Abdulḥalīm Muhammad Qunbus⁷.

³ ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Wāḥid Wāfi. *‘Ilm al-Lughah*, (Al-Qāhirah: Nahḍat Miṣr, 2004), 313.

⁴ Abū Bishr ‘Amr ‘Uthmān. *Kitāb Sībawayh*. Taḥqīq Wa Sharḥ ‘Abdul-Salām Muhammad Hārūn. (Al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-Khanjī, 1988), vol. 1, 24.

⁵ Abdurahman Jalāl al-Dīn al-Sayūfī. *al-Muz’hir fī ‘Ulūm al-Lughah wa ‘Anwā’ihā*. (Al-Qāhirah: al-Maktabat al-Azhariyyah, 1325 A.H.), vol. 1, 369.

⁶ ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Wāḥid Wāfi, 318-320.

⁷ ‘Abdulḥalīm Muhammad Qunbus. *Mu’jam al-Alfādh al-Mushtarakah fī al-Lughat al-‘Arabiyyah*. (Istanbul: Maktabat al-Nūr, n.d.).

- *Al-Ma'athūr min al-Lughah: Mā ittafaqa Lafdhuhu wa Ikhtalafa Ma'anāhu. Taḥqīq* by Abū al-ʿAmaythil al-Aʿarābī⁸.
- *Zāhirat Mushtarak al-Lafẓī wa Mushkilat Ghumūd al-Dilālāh* by Ahmad Naṣīf al-Jinābī⁹.
- *Mā ittafaqa Lafdhuhu wa Ikhtalafa Ma'anāhu* by Hibbatullah ʿAlī al-Hasanī¹⁰.
- *Mā ittafaqa lafdhuhū wa ikhtalafa Ma'anāhu* by Ibrahim Abi Muhammad al-Yazīdī¹¹.
- *Al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāʾir* by Muqātil Sulayman al-Balkhī¹².
- *Ittifāq al-Mabānī wa Iftirāq al-Maʿānī* by Sulaiman Banīn al-Daḡīqī¹³.
- *Kashf al-Sarāʾir fī Maʿana al-Wujūh wa al-Ashbāh wa al-Naḍhāʾir* by Shams al-Dīn Muhammad al-ʿImād¹⁴.

Whether or not literal association actually exists as a phenomenon has been debatable, as some scholars, such as Ibn Darastawayh, have completely denied its existence in the Arabic language¹⁵. While others, such as Ibrāhīm Anas, approve the existence of literal association but not entirely; in other words, they have set up conditions and rules under which literal association can occur¹⁶. However, the majority of the scholars of the Arabic language believe in the existence of literal association (*al-Mushtarak al-Lafẓī*) and they also believe that it exists, not only in the Arabic

⁸ Abū al-ʿAmaythil al-Aʿarābī. *Al-Ma'athūr min al-Lughah: Mā ittafaqa Lafdhuhu wa Ikhtalafa Ma'anāhu. Taḥqīq* Muhammad Abduḡādir Ahmad. (Al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-Nahḡat al-Maṣriyyah, 1988).

⁹ Ahmad Naṣīf al-Jinābī. *Zāhirat Mushtarak al-Lafẓī wa Mushkilat Ghumūd al-Dilālāh*. Majallat al-Majmaʿ al-ʿIlmī al-ʿIrāqī, al-Juzʾ al-Rābīʿ, al-Mujallad al-Khāmis Wa Thalāthūn, 1984. <<http://www.m-a-arabia.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/MM7.pdf>> viewed on 18 February 2019.

¹⁰ Hibbatullah ʿAlī al-Hasanī. *Mā ittafaqa Lafdhuhu wa Ikhtalafa Ma'anāhu*. (Bayrūt: Dār al Nashr Farants Shtayz, 1992). <<http://m-a-arabia.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/MM7.pdf>> viewed on 18 February 2019.

¹¹ Ibrahim Abi Muhammad al-Yazīdī. *Mā ittafaqa lafdhuhū wa ikhtalafa Ma'anāhu*. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1971).

¹² Muqātil Sulayman al-Balkhī. *Al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāʾir*. (Dubay: Markaz Jumʿah al-Mājid li al-Thaqāfah wa al-Turāth, 2006).

¹³ Sulaiman Banīn al-Daḡīqī. *Ittifāq al-Mabānī wa Iftirāq al-Maʿānī*. (al-ʿUrdun: Dār Oman, 1985).

¹⁴ Shams al-Dīn Muhammad al-ʿImād. *Kashf al-Sarāʾir fī Maʿana al-Wujūh wa al-Ashbāh wa al-Naḍhāʾir*. (al-ʿIskandariyyah: al-Maktabat al-Miṣriyyah li al-Ṭibāʿat wa al-Nashr, 2004).

¹⁵ Abdul-ʿĀl Sālim Mukrim. *al-Mushtarak al-Lafthī fī Ḍawʿi Gharīb al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*. (Al-Qāhirah: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 2009), 12.

¹⁶ Ibid., 15.

language, but also in almost all languages¹⁷. Therefore, the literal association [associative meaning] is classified as one of the core components of speech and sense relations, and it is determined by many factors. One of these factors is the context, which plays a substantial role and has a significant impact on determining and specifying the semantic meaning in relation to the Arabic Language¹⁸.

1.0 The Definition of the Literal Association in the Arabic Language

As it has been mentioned earlier, Sībawayh was the first scholar of Arabic Linguistics who declared literal association as a part of the categories of speech in the Arabic language. According to his book, *Kitāb Sībawayh*, he stated that “One should know that, from the part of the speech of the Arab (the Arabic language) is to have two different wordings (words) and their meanings are one; or, to have two different meanings with one single wording; or, to have two same wordings with two distinct meanings”¹⁹. After Sībawayh, Aḥmad ibn Fāris, a well-known scholar from the fourth century who studied the Arabic language in depth, also acknowledged the existence of the concept of literal association²⁰. He defined literal association in his book *al- Ṣāḥibī fī Fiqh al-Lughah al- ‘Arabiyyah wa Masā’ilihā wa Sunan al- ‘Arab fī Kalāmihā* under the section of The Types of Speech in which he said, “Literal Association is the single wording which indicates and refers to two different meanings or even more in language”²¹. From these definitions, it can be deduced that classical scholars of the Arabic language adopted the simplest definitions of literal association without going into many details as opposed to modern Arabic scholars who have done so. This has resulted in many disputes when it comes to being able to concretely define literal association.

¹⁷ Ibid., 17; Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid. *al-Ishtirāk al-Lafẓī fī al-Qur’ān al-Karīm bayna al-Nazaryah wa al-Taṭabīq*. (Dimashq: Dār al-Fikir, 1999), 30.

¹⁸ Abdul- ‘Āl Sālim Mukrim, 23.

¹⁹ Abū Bishr ‘Amr ‘Uthmān, 24.

²⁰ Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 29.

²¹ Aḥmad Fāriz al-Rāzī. *al- Ṣāḥibī fī Fiqh al-Lughah al- ‘Arabiyyah wa Masā’ilihā wa Sunan al- ‘Arab fī Kalāmihā*. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al- ‘Ilmiyyah, 1997), 171-172.

One particular point of contention is the matter of metaphoric and non-metaphoric meanings. All of the classical scholars did not make a distinction between these meanings in relation to literal association and included them both in their definitions of the phenomenon. Modern scholars, on the other hand, have made a distinction between metaphoric and non-metaphoric meanings which has resulted in them understanding and creating a different definition of literal association²². Therefore, we can conclude that the core definition of literal association in the sight of those who affirm such a phenomenon in the Arabic language, is having two meanings referring to a single word, whether the meanings are metaphoric or non- metaphoric. And this concept of having more than one meaning for a single word was not rooted initially or created since the beginning of the word's existence²³. In other words, all words originate with only one singular meaning being attached to them, but over time and after a long period of language contact with other cultures and languages, the word starts developing and adapting another meaning and this process of creating another meaning goes back to the phenomenon called Semantic Evolution which is triggered by many factors²⁴.

Semantic evolution is linked to two relationships which play a role in shaping the new meaning or creating a new meaning. One is called the neighbouring relationship in which a meaning of a word will be referred to another word because of the adjacency between the two words; for example, the word "*al-ẓa'īnah*" which means the woman riding a camel in the *al-hawdaj* (howdah), has changed in terms of meaning to the word "howdah" itself and to the word "camel" itself due to the adjacent relationship between these words²⁵. The second is the similarity relationship in which a word will be referred to two things or develop another meaning with the same word because of the similarities between the two meanings. For example, the word "*al-majd*" means the situation in which the stomach of the animal is very full of feed, and now it also means "full of generosity"²⁶. Furthermore, one of the main reasons and factors that has contributed

²² Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 30; Abdurahman Jalāl al-Dīn al-Sayūfī, vol. 1, 369.

²³ 'Alī 'Abd al-Wāhid Wāfi, 314.

²⁴ Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 34; Ahmad Mukhtār 'Umar. *'Ilm al-Dilālah*. (Al-Qāhirah: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1998), 160; Ibrahim Anis. *Dilālat al-Alfādh*. (Al-Qāhirah: Maktabat Anglo, 1976), 152.

²⁵ Ibid., 112; 'Abdulḥalīm Muhammad Qunbus, 77.

²⁶ Ibrahim Anis, 152; 'Alī 'Abd al-Wāhid Wāfi, 316-317.

to the existence of literal association as a part of the semantic evolution in the Arabic language is *Islām*, (Islam) which has introduced a lot of rituals and practices that share existing words that have always been found in Arabic; however, they now exist with slightly different meanings. Thus, we have in Arabic the general meaning vs. the specific meaning, or otherwise known as the Linguistic meaning vs. the Islamic meaning²⁷.

2.0 The Opinions and Disputes of Scholars of the Arabic Language About the Existence of Literal Association in the Arabic Language

It has been known that scholars of the Arabic language have never held one opinion about the existence of literal association in the Arabic language and they have all had various opinions on this matter. And each scholar, or group of scholars, holds onto their own reasons and conviction about their opinion. For example, from the first school which denies the phenomenon and existence of literal association is Ibn Darastawayh, who believes that the literal association phenomenon never occurs in the speech of Arabs due to many reasons, and here are some:

1. Since Allāh Almighty is the one who has established and founded the Arabic language and has chosen this language for His religion; then, it is not from the wisdom to have a language in which ambiguity may occur, especially if we know that Allāh has put this language forward to be used in order for us to understand its meanings.
2. If it is allowed for a language to have a single word with two different meanings, then this language will be vague and ambiguous and this is not what languages are for.
3. Looking into a word that has two different meanings without knowing the significance behind it will lead to the conclusion that Arabic has literal association; however, looking into the Arabic lexicon in depth will lead to the conclusion that there is no such thing as literal association rather, they are various meanings belonging to the same meaning in reality.
4. The different meanings of any single word in the Arabic language go back to the morphological structures and changes that have occurred on those words, and those

²⁷ Ahmad Mukhtār 'Umar, 160-162; 'Alī 'Abd al-Wāḥid Wāfi, 319-320.

changes sometimes are either omitted, or not obvious and clear. This will result in reaching the conclusion that this occurrence is from the literal association when in fact the existence of the literal association is found only in the minds of those who believe in its occurrence but not in reality²⁸.

Ibn Darastawahy concluded that the Arabic language does not approve or acknowledge this kind of phenomenon. According to him, if there was more than one meaning of a single word, this goes back to the morphology of the word which is the only key that can be used to distinguish between meanings; thus, this is not from the literal association as many people think but rather, it is due to the morphological changes²⁹. However, his argument and his opinion regarding literal association were not based on any scientific basis whether it is a religious base or a linguistic base. Thus, he falls into some contradictions regarding literal association in terms of how it can rarely occur in the Arabic language³⁰.

Furthermore, one of the scholars of Arabic who has tended to the opinion of Ibn Darastawayh regarding the phenomenon of the literal association occurring in the Arabic language is Ibrāhīm Anas. He has stated that literal association does not happen or occur in the Arabic language except with words that have meanings that are completely distinctive from each other and those meanings of the same words do not have any kind of relation or link to each other in terms of the stem, the root, or the meaning in general. As a result, if it is proven that there is a single word bearing two completely different meanings with no relationship between these meanings, then we can call this literal association. However, if we have a single word which carries two different meanings and they somehow have a link and a similarity to each other in terms of meaning, then one of the meanings will be the fundamental and original meaning, while the other will be the metaphorical meaning, and considered to be a meaning that is only associated with that word. Therefore, his opinion about the existence of literal association in the Arabic language is more conditional whereas Ibn Darastawayh denies it all. Consequently, Ibrāhīm Anas

²⁸ Abdul-‘Āl Sālim Mukrim, 12-14; Abdurahman Jalāl al-Dīn al-Sayūtī, vol. 1, 385.

²⁹ Bid Allah Ja‘afar Muhammad. *Taṣḥīḥ al-Faṣīḥ wa Sharḥuhū*. (Al-Qāhirah: al-Majlis al-‘Ālā li al-Shu‘ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 2004), 273-274; Abdul-‘Āl Sālim Mukrim, 14.

³⁰ Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 32.

acknowledges that the literal association phenomenon occurs in the Arabic language but only to a certain extent and in very specific cases where the condition mentioned above is followed which is that there must be no relationship whatsoever between the two meanings that are presented by a single word. To illustrate this condition, he gave the example of the word “*al-khāl*” which means the mother’s brother and it also means the mole or the beauty mark in the face. He also acknowledges the existence of literal association occurring in the *Qur’ān* but he believes that it rarely occurs. One of the instances where he does believe literal association exists in a *Qur’ānic* context is with the word *’ummah* where in one context, it refers to a group of people and in another context it means religion, and these two meanings have no relationship between them linguistically³¹. This school of opinion mentioned above is not the school of opinion that the majority of linguists and scholars of the Arabic language follow. In fact, most of the classical and contemporary scholars of the Arabic language confirm and believe strongly in the existence of literal association in the Arabic language to the point that some began broadening and expanding this concept to more than just words and meanings but to genres and structures of syntactic constituents, such as Ibn Fāris³². However, most of the scholars of the Arabic language, classical and modern, stick with the understanding that literal association refers to a single word with various meanings.

Furthermore, this phenomenon of literal association can also occur on prepositions, nouns, verbs, and in all word classes in the same way³³. And from the classical scholars who support this opinion are al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, Sībawayh and many others. Their proofs about literal association are more scientific and linguistic based than the first school of opinion that has many contradictions, which has weakened their views and beliefs about literal association. For example, Ibrāhīm Anas has stated that literal association occurs rarely in the Arabic language; however, in his book “*Fī al-Lahajāt al-‘Arabiyyah*” he states that the Arabic lexicon is full of literal association. He further mentions that literal association evolved from phonetic evolution³⁴. These kinds of

³¹ Ibrahim Anis, 213; Abdul-‘Āl Sālim Mukrim, 14-16.

³² Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 30.

³³ Abdul-‘Āl Sālim Mukrim, 20.

³⁴ Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 42.

contradictions can also be seen with Ibn Darastawayh who has based his opinions about literal association on religious reasons and beliefs. Because of this, he thinks that if he confirms the literal association in the Arabic language, then this will entail that the *Qur'ān* has it as well due to the fact that it is written in Arabic; and this goes against his general belief that the purpose of any language, especially the language of the *Qur'ān*, is to provide clarity and not ambiguity³⁵. However, from a religious point of view, what he claimed is not scientifically and linguistically accurate because we have many proofs from the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah* that show literal association occurring in the *Qur'ān*, as it does in the Arabic language. In the *ḥadīth* that is related in Bukhārī and narrated by 'Abdulāh ibn Mas'ūd, when the 'āyah, "Those who believed and did not mix up their belief with injustice are the ones who will have the security and they will be alright."³⁶ was revealed, the Muslims felt it very hard on them, so they said, "O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! Who amongst us does not do wrong to himself?" He replied, "The 'āyah does not mean this. But that (injustice) means to associate partners in worship with Allah: Don't you listen to what Luqmān has said to his son when he was advising him, "**O my son! Join not others in worship with Allah. Verily joining others in worship with Allah is a great injustice indeed.**" [*Luqmān* : 13].³⁷

Nevertheless, what matters in this section are the linguistic proofs and evidence; therefore, most linguists have proven the phenomenon of literal association linguistically to be one of the universal properties of natural human languages that occurs in almost all the languages in the world. This has been proven by empirical investigations which have classified literal association as one of the universal and innate features of language, and this goes along with the theory of Universal Grammar introduced by Noam Chomsky³⁸. The reason why literal association is universal across all languages in the world is because language, in general, is very limited with its terminology but not with its meanings, especially in Arabic, to the point that one single word can generate many meanings based on the diacritics. For example, the words: "*al-ghamru*" which

³⁵ Abdul- 'Āl Sālim Mukrim, 12.

³⁶ *Qur'ān*, *Al- 'An 'ām*: 82

³⁷ Muhammad Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 4, 1st ed. 2002: 3429.

³⁸ Stephen Holman. *Dawr al-Kalimah fī al-Lughah*. trans. Kamal Muhammad Yasīr (n.p., n.d.), 115.

means the pouring or the overflow water; “*al-ghimru*” which means the deep hatred; “*al-ghumru*” which means the one who does not try or experience things in life, also the weak or the naive³⁹.

3.0 The Factors and the Reasons Behind the Emergence of the Literal Association in the Arabic Language

When classical and modern scholars from different fields and schools, such as scholars of the Arabic language, scholars of *Ḥadīth*, scholars of *Fiqh* and the concepts of *Fiqh*, and scholars of *Tafsīr*, talk about the reasons behind the emergence and the existence of literal association, they always take it back to two factors: internal and external factors, which play a big role in the emergence of such a phenomenon. The internal factors are more about linguistic factors rather than anything that is non-linguistic. These factors look into the linguistic evolution, factors, and triggers that have either a direct, or an indirect, impact on any linguistic phenomena such as the literal association that we are exploring and focusing on in this research. Over time, these linguistic triggers become and transform into rules and principles which will become systematic in language, and these factors and triggers can be phonological, phonetic, morphological, or semantic. The external factors refer to the non-linguistic factors that come from outside of the language into the language with a direct or an indirect impact, and this stimulus on language usually happens gradually. And those external factors are usually related to the changes that occur in language overtime resulting from the surrounding and environment in general. Some of these factors can be geographical, historical, cultural, political, or religious, which generally have an impact on language somehow⁴⁰. And these are some of the reasons behind the emergence of literal association:

1. *The different dialectal varieties of the same language caused by regional and tribal factors.*
They can be identified by different linguistic features in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, which can be done by analyzing the language family tree and exploring the connection and the link between the family nodes. This enables researchers to have a

³⁹ Abdul-‘Āl Sālim Mukrim, 18-22.

⁴⁰ Ahmad Mukhtār ‘Umar, 159-160.

better understanding about the linguistic evolution. Also, by looking into the usage and the meaning of certain words used across the dialects of the same language because Arabs, as it has been known, come from different regions and tribes which will result in different semantics and usages of the same words⁴¹.

2. *The usage of metaphorical and non-metaphorical speech.* Metaphorical speech is defined as the usage of words in a way that indicate a meaning that is different from what it actually means literally. On the other hand, we have the non-metaphorical speech, which is the usage of words to indicate the actual meaning of what it means literally⁴². Metaphoric speech is considered to be from the literal association by almost all the classical scholars of the Arabic language, and this is clearly seen in the dictionary of literal association called *al-Munajjid fī al-Lughah*⁴³. Alternatively, some of the modern scholars of the Arabic language exclude this type of style of speech from the literal association⁴⁴.
3. *The usage of equivocation.* This is when the speaker would use equivocal language with the intention of deceiving the listeners either for good or bad reasons. And according to al-'Imām al-Rāzī, this type of language usage has helped to create more instances of literal association in language⁴⁵.
4. *The semantic evolution.* This is something that is occurring all the time and it has a big impact on the existence of literal association, and it varies from one language to another. In the Arabic language, for example, the semantics of the words have gone through semantic evolution more often and quicker than other languages because of Islam. So many Arabic words have developed other meanings due to the implementation of Islam that this occurrence has developed its own category known as *al-Ma'ānī al-Shar'iyyah*

⁴¹ Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 45.

⁴² Ibid., 48.

⁴³ Ali al-Hasan al-Hanāfi. *Al-Munajjid fī al-Lughah*. (Al-Riyāḍ: Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1988), 254; Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 30.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 44.

which is translated as the Islamic meanings in comparison to the linguistic meanings. And this can be seen in the following words: *Zakāh*, *kāfir*, *Ribā*, as well as many others⁴⁶.

5. *Language contact with another language* can generate a new meaning for a word through the borrowing process, which occurs on different levels in linguistics. One of these levels is when a word gains a new meaning at the semantic level. This is when a single word exists in two different languages with the same pronunciation, such as the word “*hub*”. In Arabic, the original meaning of “*hub*” is ‘love’ or ‘passion’; however, because of the language contact Arabic has had with the Farsi language, this word has evolved semantically to borrow the Farsi meaning for the word “*hub*” which is ‘jar’ or ‘bucket’ used for water, as well as maintaining its original meaning in Arabic⁴⁷.
6. *Morphological evolution and changes* have heavily contributed to the existence of literal association in the Arabic language. The morphological change refers to changes in the structure of words, which are interrelated and intergraded with phonology, syntax, and semantics. This takes place when two words that are completely different from each other in terms of their morphological structures undergo phonological changes, which lead to morphological assimilation, which will lead to semantic evolution over time. For example, the word “*al-‘asīf*” has changed over time from “*al-‘asīf*” to “*al-‘asīf*” with *hamzah* instead of ‘*ayn*’. This word originally carries the meaning of ‘the one who cries and gets sad fast’ and currently is used to refer to ‘the labourer’ or ‘the waged worker’⁴⁸.
7. *The sociolinguistic factors*. These factors focus mainly on how social life, or the society in general-- including all the stimuli in society, can affect the language. It looks into ethnicity, religion, social status, gender, age, attitudes, and many other things that can affect semantic

⁴⁶ Abdul-‘Āl Sālim Mukrim, 10-11; Stephen Holman. *Dawr al-Kalimah fī al-Lughah*. trans. Kamal Muhammad Yasir, (n.p., n.d.); Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 46-47.

⁴⁷ Ramaḍān ‘Abdutawāb. *fuṣūl fī Fiqh al-‘Arabiyyah* (6th end.). (Al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-khānjī, 1999), 331; Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 45-46.

⁴⁸ Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 46-47; Muhammad Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, vol. 3, 2695.

evolution, which, in turn, has participated in the creation of literal association in the Arabic language⁴⁹.

4.0 The Factor by which the Semantics of the Literal Association can be Determined in the Arabic Language

Before discussing the factors and elements by which the semantics of literal association are determined in the Arabic language, we have to highlight the fact that the factors and elements by which the semantics of literal association are determined in the Arabic language are different from those that are used in the *Qur'ān*. Even though the *Qur'ān* is written in Arabic and abides by the linguistic rules of the Arabic language, it differentiates itself because of the belief that the *Qur'ān* is a revelation with its meanings being provided by Allāh almighty. As Muslims, we believe that our Prophet Muḥammad *ṣalā allāhu 'alayhi wa salam* is the only one who has interpreted the *Qur'ān*— not all of it, but what needs to be interpreted— to his companions. And those interpretations were then narrated to his companions, followers, and the followers of the followers until they have reached us with full authentic chains of narrations⁵⁰.

The brief introduction above was given in order to emphasize the fact that many Muslims and non-Muslims sometimes attempt to understand the *Qur'ān* and the semantics of the *Qur'ānic* wordings solely with the linguistic principles of the Arabic language. However, this will cause semantic clashes at different levels of semantics, as well as create misunderstandings and misinterpretation regarding the meaning of certain words and verses in the *Qur'ān*. It is also vital to make the distinction that the *Qur'ānic* Arabic is different from the Arabic language itself in terms of the semantic output. Even though the *Qur'ān* is written in Arabic, it has its own principles and concepts of *Tafsīr* (interpretation) that are different from the principles found in the Arabic language in relation to Semantics. Thus, there are many *āyāt* in the *Qur'ān* that have reasons of revelation; in other words, they have been revealed specifically on a particular group, event, or incident. Whereas in Arabic this is not found, yet the Arabic linguists have employed and replaced

⁴⁹ 'Alī 'Abd al-Wāḥid Wāfi, 324-325.

⁵⁰ Muḥammad Hussein al-Dhahabī. *ʿIlm al-Tafsīr*. (Falastīn: Maktabat Falastīn li al-Kutub al-Muṣawwarah, 1977), 14-16.

that with a sub-field in linguistics called Pragmatics, which is applied on both the *Qur'ān* and the Arabic language. However, the difference in the way Pragmatics has been applied on both the Arabic language and the *Qur'ān* is that in Arabic, it gets tested first in order to extract the semantics of the literal association whereas in the *Qur'ān* it is not applied until after some primary procedures and processes get applied. Therefore, when scholars talk about literal association in relation to the Arabic language, they tend to use the term 'context only' by which they mean the linguistic context; but, when it comes to the literal association in the *Qur'ān*, they tend to use the term 'the *Qur'ānic* context' which encompasses more into consideration than the context that they refer to with regards to the Arabic language. The former is more about the linguistic context with its entailments that are studied by Pragmatics, and the second is more about the Islamic, or the *Qur'ānic* context, with its entailments that are studied by the science of *Tafsīr*⁵¹. Moreover, we have the aspect of abrogation, which is taken into account and consideration in specifying the semantics of the literal association in the *Qur'ān*, and the *Qur'ān* in general; whereas, in the Arabic language we do not look into this aspect because abrogation in meaning is not found. However, there is a similar aspect, or concept, to the aspect of abrogation, which is the old usage or meaning versus the current meaning or usage. As a result, the language of the *Qur'ān* and the Arabic language have been viewed and treated differently in terms of semantics.

However, the most crucial factor that plays the most important role in determining the semantics of literal association in the Arabic language is context, which is studied and discovered by Pragmatics. Pragmatics has been defined as the study of how context contributes to determining the intended meaning. Pragmatics goes beyond the structural and linguistic knowledge of speakers and listeners. It encompasses many theories and approaches related to meaning that the field of Semantics doesn't cover such as speech act theory, conversational implicature, politeness, and many others. Also, Pragmatics combines and looks into many Sciences other than Linguistics, such as Anthropology which studies culture, environment, and people; Sociology which is the science of society; and all human sciences in general that have some factors that may have either a direct, or an indirect impact, on language in relation to meaning. However, the context is the

⁵¹ Abdul- 'Āl Sālim Mukrim, 44; Ahmad Mukhtār 'Umar, 68-78; Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 39-40.

key to understanding and specifying the intended meaning of literal association in the Arabic language, which cannot be determined except by context through the study of Pragmatics and Semantics which analyze the preceding, the following, and the context in which the literal association occurs⁵².

5.0 Conclusion

Literal association is a phenomenon occurring across almost all languages, in which a single word has more than one meaning. There are many books, researches, and works done on this phenomenon looking at it from different perspectives, whether linguistic or non- linguistic, as it has been mentioned earlier. Yet, we have some scholars who have denied that such a phenomenon exists and some who have affirmed it unconditionally or conditionally. As it has been mentioned that different dialects, the metaphorical style of speech, the usage of equivocation, the semantic evolution, language contact, morphological evolution, and some social linguistic factors have all played a fundamental role in creating this phenomenon. And finally, context is the main factor that holds the most powerful impact on understanding the semantics of literal association in the Arabic language.

⁵² Abdul-‘Āl Sālim Mukrim, 23; Muhammed Nūr al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 36-37; Ahmad Mukhtār ‘Umar, 68-78.

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